

AUNT MARY WAS ODD

Strange Way in Which She Aided Her Favorite, Hot-Headed Nephew

By FRANK FILSON.

"A present from Aunt Mary!" said young Mrs. Strang as the oddly-wrapped parcel was handed to her by the postman. "I just know that it's something odd, George."

It must be odd, because Aunt Mary was odd. She was a queer little old spinster, with the kindest heart and the crankiest manners that ever went into a combination. But though she had quarreled with almost all her relatives and then made up with them, and alternately cut them out of her will and then put their names back into multitudinous codicils, she had always kept the warmest spot in her heart for George Strang, her handsome artist nephew.

She had, indeed, supported him during that period which comes to every artist, when he was struggling for fame and existence in a large city against the wishes and despite the disgust of his own family. And now that he had married pretty Lucy Bentwick and was in comfortable, if not affluent circumstances, she had sent him a wedding gift.

"A china vase!" exclaimed George Strang in disgust as he eyed the queer-looking object in his hand.

It was, indeed, the most repulsive looking vase that he had ever seen. It was rotund and highly decorated with painted pink roses, and upon it was printed in small, black letters: "You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will, But the scent of the roses will cling to it still."

"Blank!" said George. It was not "blank," that he said, but it sounded like that, because Lucy promptly closed his mouth with her hand.

"She might have sent me something that we could keep on our mantel," said George Strang ruefully, looking upon the object with a shudder. "Fancy a thing like that in our liv-



"A China Vase."

ing room, Lucy! Why, it will spoil the entire aspect of the place. And I bet," he added, "that she sent the thing on purpose to get up a quarrel with me and then accuse me of quarreling with her. She'll drop in on us unexpectedly and see that the thing isn't on view."

"But it must be on view, George, dear," said Mary. "You know how quarrelsome the old dear is. If she does drop in and doesn't see it she'll cut you out of her will and then—O, George, be a little prudent!"

But George refused point-blank to have the thing in their living room. "She knows it's horrible, Lucy," he said, "and if she wants to quarrel with me let her have her way."

Which was precisely what she did have. For a few days later Aunt Mary did come up to town from Bayard's Bridge and did drop in unexpectedly, and the mantel was bare save for two antique Pompeian vases.

"Well, my dear," said the old lady, taking in the situation instantly, "I must say that I admire those ornaments upon your mantel greatly. I fear my own poor efforts to please you and George must have been singularly unsuccessful—" And then she stopped. For Lucy had run into her bedroom when the old lady was announced to get the china vase; but she had not had time to place it upon the mantel and stood guiltily hiding it beneath her apron.

"You may tell George," she continued, "that since he has seen fit to quarrel with me, who always supposed that he cared for me—since my endeavors to make his home happy and beautiful are so unappreciated, I shall waste no further time on him. And, incidentally, I shall bestow my money where it will be likely to promote greater service."

And with these words she stalked out of the apartment, leaving Lucy in tears.

She told George of the happening when he returned from his studio.

"Give me that infernal vase," he shouted. "I'm going to break it to pieces and send her the fragments by parcel post. Old tyrant! Does she think she is going to doom us to a life of artistic misery?"

But Lucy hid the vase from him. "You know, dear," she said. "Aunt Mary will take you back into favor

again if only you give her time to forget. She is very fond of you really."

"She wanted to see how far she could go," said George Strang gloomily. "It was a test. She couldn't really have liked that vase. Well, let her do her worst."

And Aunt Mary did her worst speedily, for she took it into her crabbed old mind to have a sudden seizure a week later and die. But she had had time to carry her threat into effect.

"To my nephew George," the will read, "I had intended to leave the bulk of my property. But inasmuch as his love for me could not survive a little trial that I made of it, I bequeath to him instead the china vase which is now in his wife's possession."

Yet, after all, it seemed that Aunt Mary had had singularly little to leave. For what she did leave to her dozen nephews and nieces amounted to exactly ninety-seven dollars and eighteen cents apiece.

"George," said Lucy in tears, when they got home from the funeral, "if Aunt Mary has any knowledge of what is happening now, don't you think it would please her if we kept the vase on our mantel after all?"

"I tell you what we'll do," said George. "We'll put it on the mantel each anniversary of her death as a peace offering. The rest of the year please keep it out of my sight."

"Yes, dear," said Lucy. "Suppose we keep it there just for today, to show we have no hard feeling."

She brought it out of its place of concealment and deposited it beside the Pompeian jars. George looked at it—then suddenly, overcome by passion, he dashed it to the floor. The vase broke into a thousand pieces.

"George!" exclaimed his wife wretchedly. "How could you have the heart to do that? Dear Aunt Mary! Why—there's paper inside!"

There was indeed, for the vase was hollow, and on the floor lay a long, thin, folded package.

"Bills!" shouted George Strang, as he unfolded it. And he shook out, one after another, nine bills of the value of a thousand dollars apiece.

"Look! There's a letter!" said Lucy Strang, picking up a piece of paper covered with Aunt Mary's queer, crabbed hieroglyphics.

"My dear, hot-headed nephew," George read aloud. "Forgive a cranky old woman who loves you with all her heart. I know how you will hate this vase. If you are hypocrite enough to keep it, or unkind enough to give it away, you will never read this note. But if you are honest enough to follow your impulse and shatter it you will be glad and forgive your loving old aunt."

"Dear old Aunt Mary!" said George Strang. "Lucy, dear, I'm going to have the old thing glued together and keep it in memory of her."

"Not—not—" began Lucy.

"Yes, dear, upon the living room mantel."

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FOR THOSE IN HIGH PLACES

Immense Cost of Imperial Porphyry Put It Beyond Reach of All But the Very Rich.

All students of the sculpture and architecture of the Imperial Roman age are familiar with the magnificent purple stone known as imperial porphyry, but it is probable that but few of the students know of the immense difficulties that were encountered in the procuring of the stone so much esteemed in that age of luxury.

Weigall, who personally visited the region whence this stone emanated, reached the conclusion that the great distances between the quarries and the places where the stone was used must have given the price a "boost," so that the porphyry was beyond all except the rulers of the earth.

It appears that the quarries from which this porphyry was obtained are situated in the eastern Egyptian desert, that region known as Gebel Dukhan, "The Hills of Smoke." The desert is about 27 miles from the Red sea, opposite the southern end of the peninsula of Sinai.

The quarries extended here and there into the hillsides without any resemblance of regularity. The blocks of porphyry were pried from out of the rock wherever the work could be most easily done. They were transported down the Nile, and, in fact to Rome, in the rough. This purple porphyry was not known to the ancient Egyptians. Some Roman prospectors must have scoured the desert to find it. The barren coast of that region was harborless. Each block of porphyry must, therefore, have been carried across the desert to Kench, on the Nile, and thence shipped by river barge to the sea. Then it became necessary to transship it to the great Mediterranean galleys, and thus conveyed across the treacherous waters to the port of Rome.

There is no other place in the world where this porphyry is to be found, and when the quarries ceased to be worked, some time previous to the seventh century, the use of that stone had to cease also, nor has it since been procurable.

Perils of the Bystander.

Novel legal decisions? Oh, yes, they're still being made—no end to 'em, in fact. Why, just the other day two women appeared before a Chicago judge laying claim to a bulldog. The judge was kindhearted. He didn't want to give each woman half of the dog, having some consideration, you see, for the feelings of the dog. So he gave the entire animal to a third woman, who was merely an innocent bystander. This instance serves to emphasize the extreme peril in which the innocent bystander always stands. Yet others will persist in playing the

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